WWW.WAREHOUSE.COM

Everything for PC, Mac, and LAN

MicroWarehouse offers thousands of products in four main categories: PC, Mac, Supplies, and Networking. The site is easy to navigate and offers a variety of search options.

The PC and Mac sections feature a large assortment of desktop and notebook computers and components. Computers are listed by speed, so shoppers can quickly narrow their search to just the choices within a target range. When you're buying RAM or storage, the site's "EZ selectors" display a selection of compatible memory and storage options based on information you provide about your system.

In the Networking area, you'll find anything you might need to get two or more machines talking and sharing, including servers, hubs, and cables. Order custom cables by faxing in a form or calling the hotline. Beyond these basics, you'll find everything from rack-mount enclosures and test equipment to wall plates and junction mounts. The online technical reference guide will answer any questions that come up.

The Supplies section offers copier and fax accoutrements, telephone accessories, media, and printer essentials. It also contains carrying-case and furniture sections, each with a broad array of stock.

A bevy of manufacturer stores is linked to this site, and these links can lead you to more information about products. Stock status is updated five days a week, so shoppers can be assured that the merchandise is there when they need it. And while MicroWarehouse exhibits more than 25,000 products in its online catalog, it also offers service via e-mail and phone, and technical support is accessible six days a week.

Frequent shoppers may want to subscribe to the *Online Advantage* newsletter, which notifies readers of sales and new items. You can also request any of the company's three traditional mail-order catalogs. In addition to clearance and hot-buy areas, MicroWarehouse offers daily giveaways of substantial merchandise, such as PDAs and 17-inch monitors.

In addition to mainstream consumers, MicroWarehouse reaches out to specialty markets, handling academic, government, and corporate accounts. It also offers six international Web sites servicing Canada, Sweden, Holland, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. ▼

COMPILED BY KEVIN SAVETZ AND PEACE GARDINER

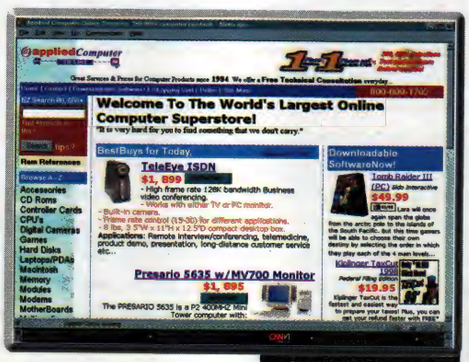
PC Shopping Sites

Access Micro.....www.accessmicro.com
When browsing the selection of merchandise at Access Micro, don't forget to check out the great weekly deals. With 45,000 items ranging from memory to T1 routers available, shoppers will enjoy perusing the variety at this searchable site. The help desk even provides aid to first-time visitors.
Features • online order tracking • government and educational discounts • international orders welcome

Aiyamicro.....www.aiyamicro.com
Aiyamicro sells PC systems, parts, and peripherals. You can browse by category—CPUs, backup devices, monitors, and so on—but a product-search function would be a welcome addition. Aiyamicro also offers a variety of software ranging from Windows NT server software to children's titles.
Features • message boards and chat sessions • online customer service and technical support • links to manufacturers' sites
Caveat • no product-search function

Anything.....www.anythinginc.net
You can find almost everything at Anything: PC, Mac, and Unix products. Tell the site what platform you're interested in, and it displays a catalog of available hardware, software, and accessories for that system. Anything offers handy search features and is less cluttered than most sites, making it easy to find the products you need.
Features • offers Microsoft Open License software • 170,000 products • most U.S. deliveries in 72 hours

Applied Computer.....www.applied-computer.com
Applied Computer offers free online purchasing consultation, and will match or beat any advertised price. The handy RAM reference feature will help you determine what type of memory your PC needs, as well as whether it's in stock.
Features • more than 300,000 products • RAM reference simplifies upgrades • training classes



Applied Computer

AtomicPC.....www.atomicpc.com
Buy computer equipment and help save the world in one fell swoop. AtomicPC is a unique online store with the mission of funding charities involved in the preservation of the planet and humankind. The site offers 35,000 products, including hardware, software, and accessories, with about half available for immediate shipping.
Features • portion of proceeds go to environmental, health, and social charities • can verify that any item is in stock • self-study training books and videos available

Beyond.com .....www.beyond.com
This is a surefire site for PC and Mac software shoppers. You can browse Beyond.com by category or search for something by name to track down the titles you want. Zoom in on the most popular software by viewing the top 10 sellers in a category. You'll find everything from reference tools to games.
Features • lists PC or Mac software, depending on your platform • free, targeted newsletter highlights the software in which you're interested • handy top 10 lists

Black Box.....www.blackbox.com
Specializing in cabling and network connectivity products, Black Box is a do-it-yourselfer's dream. The extensive catalog of storage, LAN, switch, surge-protection, and other accessories is in PDF format, so the Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view it. The catalog offers technical details, diagrams, and comparison charts for hundreds of products.
Features • detailed, 900-page downloadable catalog • order online or request a quote • warehouse-clearance specials
Caveat • Can't browse catalog online

Bookmark Software .....bookmarksoftware.com
Regardless of your computer's platform or age—whether it's a brand-spanking-new Windows machine, a Mac, or a decade-old VAX, you'll find software for it at Bookmark Software. Application categories covered here include word processing, database, utility, and reference. The site's "home store" features education, hobby, and game titles.
Features • products for Windows, OS/2, Mac, Unix, NetWare, and VMS • SOHO specialty shop • can create a software wish list

BuyComp.com.....www.buycomp.com
BuyComp is devoted to computer hardware, including systems, PDAs, peripherals, and networks. This elaborate site is part of an army of e-commerce sites, including BuySoft for software, BuyBooks, BuyVideos, and BuyGames. You can jump between

stores in a flash, plunking disparate products into your virtual shopping cart for bundled delivery.
Features • powerful product-search tools • lease option on all systems • huge selection of DVDs

Buy Now .....www.buynowcomputers.com
Shopping for a PC is easy at BuyNow, especially for those who know exactly what they want. BuyNow carries top PC brands, Apple Computer products, and custom systems. The easiest way to search this site is by manufacturer part number.
Features • more than 30,000 in-stock items • customer service available via e-mail • same-day shipping

Buyonet .....www.buyonet.com
Buyonet sells software—both traditional boxed programs and downloadable commercial software. If the business software, utility, or game you want is available for download, you can pay for it and have it running in minutes (and save on shipping charges). Otherwise, you can order the software—manuals and all—for quick shipping.
Features • site in six languages, software available in 20 languages • payment accepted in 22 currencies • purchases earn you credits for free software

Cables To Go.....www.ctghub.com
Cables, cords, wires—by any name, they're the glue that holds much of your computer equipment together. Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable and adapter your PC might need, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find gender changers, networking products, and all sorts of adapters. If the company doesn't have the cable you need, it can build one to your specifications.
Features • specials on overstocks and liquidations • hard-to-find tools and test equipment

CDW.....www.cdw.com
CDW offers an impressive array of hardware and software. If you're buying a new PC, a PDA, a monitor, a modem, a digital camera, or a printer, the site's CDW Compare tool shines. Choose up to five products you are considering, and it will display side-by-side comparisons of them, including their photos, specs, prices, and warranties.
Features • in-stock items are clearly marked • list of available rebates • can browse just products with manufacturer rebates

Chili Pepper Computers.....www.chilipepperpc.com
Shoppers can explore the large selection of hardware and software available at Chili Pepper Computers by searching by keyword or manufacturer part number. The funny and informative "about us" section gives users an opportunity to learn about the economics of buying and selling on the Internet. Customer service and technical support are available via e-mail.
Features • hard-to-find motherboards • in-stock items easily identified • networking equipment

ClubComputer.....www.clubcomputer.com
This site sells custom-built PCs, computer furniture, and a wide variety of peripherals and accessories. Every item at ClubComputer has two prices: a regular and a member price. Although there is a membership fee, the savings defray the cost of joining—especially with the $1 trial membership. Members receive a free newsletter.
Features • purchases earn frequent-flyer miles • free shipping on all orders • downloadable software

Chili Pepper Computers

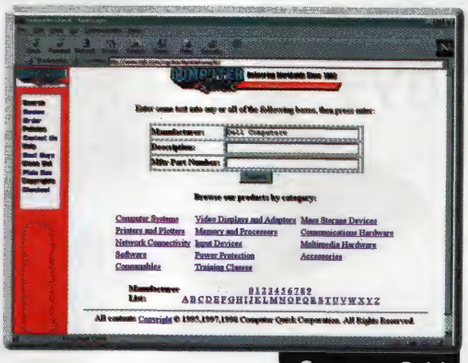
CNET Shopper.com.....cnet.shopper.com
CNET's Shopper.com, a computer product and pricing search engine, takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. Tell it what you're seeking, and the site quickly serves up a list of online stores that sell the item—along with its cost at each store, sorted by price. The site tracks the prices of more than 100,000 products. The database is updated daily.
Features • locates the best price among 100 online stores • gives approximate shipping cost and number of units in stock (for some items) • provides phone numbers and links to each store

CompUSA Online .....www.compusa.com
If you happen to live out of range of all CompUSA's 200 stores nationwide, or if you prefer to do your shopping or buying research online, visit the superstore's Web site. The site is as impressive as the company's retail stores, offering a veritable cornucopia of PC products, accessories, and software.
Features • deals on clearance, demo, refurbished, and opened-box items • Apple products • driver-software archive

computercomputer.com ...www.computercomputer.com
Interested in buying components and piecing together your own custom PC? The Web site for computercomputer.com sells bare-bones systems that'll make a good starting point. It also offers plenty of complete systems. These come with technical support via telephone and a one-year onsite warranty. The site's affiliated software link carries more than 100,000 titles. Quotes on custom systems are available online or via telephone.
Features • online system configurator • bare-bones systems for do-it-yourself fun • modems and networking supplies

Computer Literacy Bookshops.....www.clbooks.com
You'll find piles and piles of computer books here. Computer Literacy Bookshops is a bookstore devoted to computer books, training manuals, documentation, and research reports. Search its entire catalog in a flash or browse by subject for categories ranging from artificial intelligence to telecommunications. It stocks a wide array of titles—from business books to the most technical tomes.
Features • reviews of new books and galleys • new-title notification via e-mail • see top 25 bestsellers

Computer Quick.....www.cqk.com
Designed for folks who know what they want, Computer Quick offers plain-box, best-buy, and close-out merchandise in addition to a selection of more than 73,000 items in regular stock. It offers hardware and software from most major manufacturers, as well as tools and test equipment. The site can be viewed with or without frames.
Features • delivering products worldwide since 1986 • huge selection of IBM and HP hardware • some Apple items available
Caveat • tax and shipping not computed when ordering


Computer Quick

Computers4Sure www.computers4sure.com
Fifteen diverse departments offer a wide range of products from networking equipment and peripherals to PDAs and scanners. Computers4Sure has top brands and more than 30,000 products. Shoppers can keep tabs on their spending with the Shopping Cart subtotal, which is always onscreen.
Features • can power-search for a specific product • daily and blue-light specials • hundreds of software titles

computershopper.com .....computershopper.com
Computer Shopper's own computer-buying site on ZDNet offers the choice of buying hardware and software products (new, overstocked, and refurbished) through a secure connection, by phone, or via links to vendor Web sites. It also provides access to reviews from all ZD publications, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections on the most popular product categories.
Features • thousands of products from more than 120 vendors • side-by-side comparisons of the listings that interest you most • daily and weekly advice on new products and good deals

CyberWarehouse.....www.cyberwarehouse.com
If you're the kind of shopper who can't pass up a bargain-basement sale or an outlet mall, this site may be for you. CyberWarehouse is a discount outlet offering PCs, monitors, modems, printers, other peripherals, and software. Look for bargains on refurbished items, overstocks, customer refusals, and closet products.
Features • can see whether product is new, refurbished, and so on • all items include warranty • "What's New, What's Hot" newsletter
Caveat • may take up to five days to ship

SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 284

Damark .....www.damark.com
If you need a new computer, but can't afford top-of-the-line prices, visit Damark. It offers low prices on new but discontinued computer systems from Acer, Fujitsu, Packard Bell, and other manufacturers. Although out of production, the systems are hardly obsolete: Most include impressively fast processors and hard drives. For further savings, check the site's list of factory-serviced computers.
Features • special discounts for Damark club members • audio/video and home-office equipment • can check online-order status

Download.com.....www.download.com
When you're looking for shareware or free software, download.com is a fine starting point. Browse or search its massive directory of software. Down-to-earth reviews and well-written newsletters will help you find the perfect programs. The site links to tens of thousands of files. The downside? You won't have time to download them all.
Features • download sites' reliability rated • PC and Mac files • can see new, popular, and top-pick programs

eBarn.....www.ebarn.com
When you need new software, sometimes fast isn't fast enough. If the local computer stores are closed, and overnight delivery just won't do, try eBarn. You can pay for, register, and download commercial software in a jiffy here. You'll find programs from Corel, Norton, and other big-name publishers. You won't get a box or a printed manual.
Features • Windows, OS/2, Mac, Unix, and handheld software • no waiting for shipment or registration codes • the manual- and package-free software costs less
Caveat • no manual included with software

Egghead Auctions .....www.surplusauction.com
Egghead Auctions (formerly called Surplus Auction) can be a great place to find a deal on computer hardware, software, and consumer products—if you don't mind a shopping experience that's more like a trip to Vegas than a trip to Fry's. Find a product you want and place a bid. If you have a high bid when the auction closes, it's yours. The product selection is limited but always changing.
Features • fun way to find deals on new and refurbished products • auctions last from one hour to two days • inventory is constantly changing

Electronics Boutique .....www.ebworld.com
Electronics Boutique is a gamers' paradise. Here, you'll find game software for your PC and your Mac, as well as titles for the PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and other game consoles. You'll also find accessories to help you win those games, including 3Dfx cards, joysticks, and strategy guides. In addition, the site sells educational toys, game-related collectibles, and DVD videos.
Features • new releases and hot products • can search for age-appropriate games • lists release dates for new game titles

1st Stop Software.....www.1stopsoft.com
Carrying more than 100,000 products, this online software store lets PC and Mac users buy and download software without leaving their computers. Because all the merchandise is carried online and sent electronically, there is no packaging waste, and titles are never sold out. Traditional boxed software is also available.
Features • customer service by mail, phone, or e-mail • DOS and Unix software available

Global Mart

Global Mart.....www.globe-mart.com
Global Mart's computer area is well-organized, so shoppers can zoom right to the product category they want, whether it's video splitters, flat-panel displays, digital cameras, or multifunction printers. The great selection here includes handheld PCs and UPS backup systems. This Web shop also has a software affiliate with 100,000 titles.
Features • factory-serviced PC values • monthly product specials • electronics and tools available

HardwareStreet.com.....www.hardwarestreet.com
Shoppers in the market for hardware, software, and networking products can choose from more than 39,000 products at HardwareStreet. In addition, 1 percent of all profits go to The National Forest Foundation, so you can help the environment while getting the merchandise you need. Affiliated sites SoftwareStreet.com and DownloadDrive.com offer thousands of software choices.
Features • 1,100 brands offered • free newsletter • great selection of digital cameras

HardwareStreet.com

iDot.com.....www.idot.com
Look to iDot for preconfigured or custom-built PCs. If you want to configure your own system, you just select from the impressive list of add-ons and watch the price change accordingly. The company certainly isn't the biggest PC seller on the Net, but it is striving to be among the best. Each PC comes with a one-year onsite warranty—upgradable to three years.
Features • onsite service warranty for all systems • technical support available by telephone, e-mail, and Web • equipment leases available

Insight Enterprises.....www.insight.com
Insight specializes in hardware and software. Peripherals abound—if you need a new modem, a keyboard, or a printer, Insight's well-organized category list will put copious choices in reach. You can order a preconfigured computer with just a few clicks or use the site's Configurator to customize the machine of your dreams. The search engine is better than most, letting you limit your system search based on price.
Features • can find out immediately if a product is in stock • free newsletters featuring tech news, close-outs, and new products • separate sites for U.S., Canada, and U.K.

J and R Computer World .....www.jandr.com
PC and Mac users can find merchandise at this diverse site. Whether you're shopping for an Aptiva or an iMac, hardware and accessories for you abound at J and R, making this a one-stop shop for many. Shoppers will also enjoy the complete selection of office, educational, and gaming software.
Features • multimedia upgrades • DVD-ROMs • home video-game systems
Caveat • shipping charges not calculated online

Jumbo .....www.jumbo.com
Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive. In addition to programs for sale, you'll find free software, shareware, and thousands of commercial-application demos, so you can try before you buy. Peruse applications by category: business, multimedia, and so on. Before taking the time to download a game or Windows wallpaper, you can preview it with a screenshot.
Features • 300,000 downloadable applications • 1,000 hand-picked fonts • can pay for and download commercial software

LiBi Industries.....www.libi.com
LiBi carries top brands such as Intel and Sony, and a special icon lets shoppers immediately see what's in stock. Merchandise categories include memory, hardware, cables, software, and even videoconferencing equipment. Because this Web store sports such a slick look, it's no surprise that LiBi also offers Web design and hosting services.
Features • customer service via telephone • special area offers good values • membership required for purchases
Caveat • membership required for purchases

McGlen Micro .....www.mcglen.com
This online store offers more than 40,000 items, from desktop systems to digital cameras. Specialized searches for memory, supplies, and laptop upgrades can help you find items compatible with your computer, printer, and copier. McGlen Micro is fast, attractive, and easy to use.
Features • shortcuts to high-traffic areas of the site • can find compatible memory for your computer by specifying its make/model • real-time order tracking

MicroWarehouse.....www.warehouse.com
Featured listing this month. See page 278.

NECX.....**www.necx.com**
You won't have difficulty finding any sort of computer product here. The site offers all manner of hardware, software, and accessories. A separate arm of the site, the Outlet Center, serves up a constantly changing menu of discontinued, open-box, and refurbished products.
Features • outlet center offers special deals • customizable, free newsletter

OfficeMax

OfficeMax.....**www.officemax.com**
A few clicks at OfficeMax can transform a bare room into a fully furnished office. You'll find office furniture, computers, other business machines, and even paper and pencils under this virtual roof. The site's unique interface makes it simple to find a computer desk as well as the right computer to put on it. The adjunct Software Super Site offers thousands of Windows, Mac, and palmtop applications.
Features • low-price guarantee • free overnight shipping on orders of more than $50 • purchases earn frequent-flyer miles

Onsale.....**www.onsale.com**
One of the Web's first auction sites, Onsale has grown from a smallish warehouse for refurbished PC parts to a massive auction block for computer hardware and software, office and home products, sports and fitness equipment, and even vacation packages. Its computer category remains the best-stocked, offering daily and hourly auctions for PCs, Macs, and peripherals. If the bidding doesn't get out of hand, you can walk away with a great deal.
Features • inventory changes daily • can sell items via person-to-person auctions

Outpost.com.....**www.outpost.com**
Formerly dubbed Cyberian Outpost, this site bears no resemblance to its cold and desolate former namesake. Now simply Outpost.com, this lush site is home to hardware, software, and accessories. Take a peek at the top 10 PC or Mac products, then visit the Game Outpost to get your playtime fix.
Features • can view site in 12 languages • 15 manufacturer-specific subsites, Broderbund to Viking • "PCs Under $1,000" specialty shop

Palmtastik.....**www.palmtastik.com**
Palmtastik does one thing and does it well: PalmPilot software. If you're looking for software for your Palm PDA, Palmtastik is the place to start. The site offers freeware, try-before-you-buy shareware, and buy-before-you-try commercial software. You'll find lists of the most popular programs, featuring ratings from other Palm users.
Features • comprehensive source for Palm software • highlights newest and most popular titles • displays recent uploads

PC Mall.....**www.cc-inc.com**
If you've checked your mail this month, chances are you've received at least one PC Mall catalog. Its thick, colorful catalog is chock-full of PC products. Its Web site is just as dense, home to systems, hardware, and software. Browse or search, limiting the hits by price or to in-stock items. Check the clearance rack for bottom-dollar deals.
Features • tremendous product selection for PCs and Macs • site is also home to Mac Mall • "ProductPro" wizard finds products that meet your specifications

QualityClick.com.....**www.qualityclick.com**
This Web store covers all the basics for the home PC user. Shoppers will be pleased to see the shipping charges and warranty information before placing an order; expected time until shipping is also listed.
Features • variety of customer service and tech-support options • DVD and video systems • weekly specials

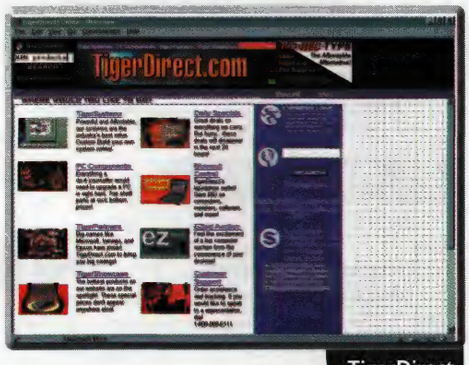
Sparco.....**www.sparco.com**
Sparco makes shopping for computer equipment simple, especially for anyone in the market for a specific product. Its catalog of more than 83,000 products can be viewed by manufacturer or category, or searched by part number. Inventory numbers are updated daily, so shoppers can see not only what is in stock, but how many of each product are available.
Features • will meet or beat others' prices • downloadable catalog for offline reading • 30-day money-back guarantee on most products

State Street Direct.....**www.ssdonline.com**
State Street Direct is a division of State Street Discount in Portsmouth, N.H., which has been in business for nearly 40 years. At its Web store, shoppers will find PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories. You can view shipping cost and stock status before you place an order.
Features • technical support via telephone • e-mail service notifies subscribers when specials occur • e-list service stores your product preferences

Stroud's Winsock Applications List.....**cws.internet.com**
Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for the latest and greatest in Internet software. Find and download freeware, shareware, and commercial Net software, including Web development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews of Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT apps.
Features • list the top 25 downloads • free e-mail summary of software updates • cool app of the week

TechShopper.....**www.techweb.com/shopper**
Knowledge is power when you're choosing computer parts, and TechShopper may give you the knowledge you need. The site offers reviews, specifications, prices, comparisons, and ratings for thousands of computer products. These details can help you find the hardware and software that's right for you. And once you make a decision, you can buy your choice with just a mouse click (and some money).
Features • online shopping tips and articles • can sell your old computer in free classified ads • free weekly newsletter

TechStore.....**www.techstore.com**
TechStore offers hardware in more than a dozen categories, ranging from CPU upgrades to storage devices. Additionally, the site offers a wide range of software: everything from Microsoft applications to the Mattel Interactive Winnie-the-Pooh. Overnight shipment is available, but TechStore's standard shipping will reach most U.S. destinations in 72 hours.
Features • competitive pricing • 30-day performance guarantee • 40,000 products



TigerDirect

TigerDirect.....**www.tigerdirect.com**
This easy-to-navigate site offers custom-built computers, tested and shipped within 48 hours. Shoppers in the mood for their own adventure can order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit. TigerDirect also has a complete selection of ready-made desktops, laptops, memory, peripherals, and software. Blowout Central offers special prices for Web buyers on hardware, software, and more.
Features • technology guarantee provides low-cost upgrades • sign up for e-mail-only sales • can search by keyword
Caveat • difficult to calculate shipping charges

Tucows.....**www.tucows.com**
Bovine bliss: Tucows is an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. The well-organized category list makes it easy to find exactly the kind of software you're seeking. Every program is rated on a scale from one to five cows. This is one of the Net's best resources for downloadable software.
Features • Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows NT, and Mac software • all software checked for viruses • mirror sites provide fast downloads

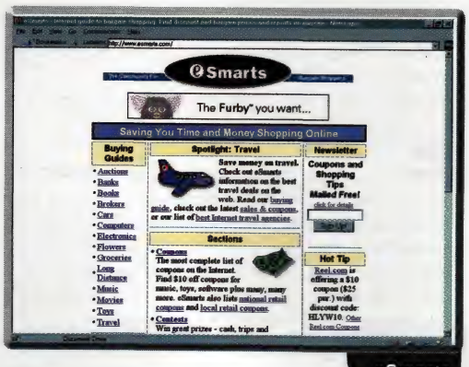
Virtual World.....**www.virtual-world.com**
You'll find great shopping and free shipping at the Virtual World Web store. Shoppers in the market for a new computer system or just a single component will enjoy this easy-to-navigate site. Extended warranties and onsite service are a part of Virtual World's customer-satisfaction goal. Daily specials are available in every department.
Features • onsite service • extensive software collection
Caveat • photographs unavailable on many items

WebShopper.....www.webshopper.com
It's two, two, two sites in one! On the one hand, WebShopper is an online computer store with an impressive catalog of goodies for sale. On the other hand, it's a great place to research the products you're considering: The site includes product reviews and comparisons from *PC World*, *Home Office Computing*, and other magazines.
Features • may browse only award-winning products • select from eight free newsletters

Zones.com.....www.zones.com
Zones.com is the umbrella for two online stores, PC Zone and Mac Zone. Boasting an impressive product selection ranging from CPUs to books, the site will show you a picture of any item and its specifications, and tell you whether it is currently in stock. If you need software in a hurry, you can pay for and download commercial programs in just minutes.
Features • 50,000 products • 100,000 downloadable software titles and images • printable rebate coupons

PC Resources

Center for the Study of Services.....www.checkbook.org
Checkbook.org is operated by the Center for the Study of Services, a nonprofit consumer organization that helps consumers get the best possible prices for products and services. If you're pondering a major purchase, click on the National Bargains link, a price reference guide for more than 8,000 big-ticket consumer products. Each listing includes a target price, a realistic low price for that product.
Features • advice on how to shop for high-end items • downloadable ratings of service shops in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Washington, D.C. • can order printed HMO and hospital ratings as well as restaurant guides



eSmarts

eSmarts.....www.esmarts.com
How do you tell the gold from the garbage when shopping online? Try eSmarts, an independent guide for Web shoppers. At eSmarts' core is a collection of buying guides that delve into online computer sellers, electronics stores, auction sites, banks, and other e-commerce categories. Its reviews can clue you in about things like whether shopping for groceries online is right for you—and if so, which e-grocer will suit your needs. Other areas review free e-mail services, shopping agents, and toy sellers.
Features • advice on how to get free "stuff" via the Net • message boards

Federal Trade Commission .....www.ftc.gov
The Federal Trade Commission's Web site is packed with useful information for consumers. The content here covers the spectrum of consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and offline. You'll become a savvy online shopper in no time. Articles cover online auctions, dealing with spam, and protecting yourself when shopping on the Net. You'll also find information about consumer issues related to the year 2000 bug.
Features • consumer's guide to cyberspace • tips on maintaining your privacy online • how to avoid credit fraud and telemarketers

56K Modem Central.....www.56k.com
Don't buy a new modem until you've visited *www.56k.com*, lest you end up with a lemon. Start with the primer on 56Kbps modems; learn the difference between K56flex, V.90, and x2 technologies; then use the "price shopper" to find a model at the best price. Once your new modem is out of the box, come back to Modem Central to download the latest firmware upgrades.
Features • buyer's guide and reviews • troubleshooting guide diagnoses common problems • buy or sell used modems with free classified ads

Help-Site .....help-site.com
Help-Site contains links to hundreds of computer-related documents and sites. It's a great place to find FAQ lists, tutorials, manuals, and official as well as unofficial support sites. You'll find documentation on DOS, Windows, OS/2, and even Unix and VAX/VMS systems. Hardware help covers modems and ISDN, scanners and digital cameras, and more. The site's maintainer opts for quality links rather than quantity: Only the most useful documents are included.
Features • noncommercial site • well-organized documentation • bad links are automatically noted

Internet ScamBusters .....www.scambusters.com
Internet ScamBusters is a Web site and a free newsletter aiming to help Net users avoid getting the shaft. Each newsletter focuses on a single type of scam, ranging from the merely annoying (such as worrisome but bogus e-mail viruses) to the downright dangerous (such as the Nigerian Advance Fee Scheme, which can leave its victims trapped in a foreign country without a visa). Scams that target online shoppers are also covered.
Features • lists the top five scams of 1998 • exposes tricks of e-mail spammers • free e-mail newsletter

ModemHelp.....www.modemhelp.com
If you use a modem, this site belongs in your bookmark list. ModemHelp provides technical support for modem users and a hearty list of links to other modem-related sites. You'll find information on upgrading to V.90 modems, tools for diagnosing problems, and discussion forums. When you need a little help, try the tutorials, where you'll find step-by-step instructions on how to install an internal modem and how to connect to the Internet with Windows.
Features • free downloadable modem-diagnostic utility • info on ISDN, cable modems, ADSL, and 56Kbps modems • discussion forums for browsers, dial-up networking, and fax modems

National Fraud Information Center .....www.fraud.org
The National Fraud Information Center is preventative medicine for those of us—particularly online users—who want to avoid being bilked. The center offers tips on identifying scholarship scams, illegal credit-repair operations, bogus travel offers, questionable sweepstakes, and other wallet-draining deceptions you may encounter online.
Features • Web credit-card safety tips • online auction advice • advice on avoiding telemarketing fraud

National Fraud Information Center

PEP ....microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle/recycle_index.html
When it's time to clear the basement of those ancient 386s and Mac Pluses, don't trash them. Instead, donate your old computers to a charity and get a tax deduction. This PEP National Directory of Computer Recycling Programs site is a directory of state, national, and international agencies that facilitate donations of used computer hardware for schools and community groups.
Features • can browse charities by state • provides contact information for each charity • directory of shopper resources

Product ReviewNet .....www.productreviewnet.com
Product ReviewNet collects abstracts of all sorts of products—including computers, appliances, sports equipment, and automobiles. Select the type of item in which you're interested, and the site displays a list of products in that category. If you would like to read the complete review, each abstract includes a citation (for magazine articles) or a link (for online reviews).
Features • find reviews of PCs, Macs, and software • 400 new abstracts every week • links to product guides available at other sites

Public Eye.....www.thepubliceye.com
Find Internet businesses that deliver the best service—and avoid the ones that don't—with Public Eye, a customer-service rating site. Public Eye uses secret shoppers who patronize Internet businesses, conducting audits and rating the service level of each business. Users can also register their opinions, positive or negative, about the online merchants they frequent.
Features • certifies online merchants • information on credit-card fraud protection • free access to customer-satisfaction database

Universal Serial Bus.....www.usb.org
The Universal Serial Bus (USB) is the new high-speed port for connecting keyboards, scanners, digital cameras, and other devices. Check this site for

technical information about the USB, answers to frequently asked questions, and information about devices that use the bus. You'll find information for end users as well as developers.
Features • you can ask questions on the message board • lists recent USB product releases • "press-room" links to relevant articles

Used Computer Mall.....www.usedcomputer.com
The Used Computer Mall is a marketplace for used computer equipment. List hardware you want to sell or find items you want to buy using its free classified ads. The site can also help you appraise the value of equipment, find dealers that specialize in many brands and types of equipment, and see what dealers have for sale.
Features • lists computer shows, equipment auctions, and swapmeets • index of nonprofit organizations accepting used-computer donations • can auction your own equipment
Caveat • cannot search classified ads

WinDrivers.com.....www.windrivers.com
WinDrivers is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. If you don't know what model of motherboard, network adapter, or sound card inhabits your PC, browse the site's photo gallery to identify it. The site even provides drivers for products from companies that have gone under, including Avatar, Logicode, Media Vision, Reveal, Spider Media, and SyQuest.
Features • daily computer news, latest driver lists • can download antivirus, compression, and other utilities • can download service packs for Microsoft software

Wireless LAN Answer Page

Wireless LAN Answer Page .....www.wirelesslan.com
This site provides an introductory tutorial to wireless local networking. In just a few pages, it clearly explains what a wireless LAN is and how you can benefit from one, as well as where to find more information. The site offers buying advice, but does not recommend specific products.
Features • introductory tutorial • links to other wireless LAN resources
Caveat • does not accept questions

World O' Windows.....www.conitech.com/windows
Frank Condron's World O' Windows is a collection of useful news, resources, and tips about current and future versions of Microsoft Windows, including Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows NT, and Windows CE. Information and user tips abound. The site can be invaluable if you're considering upgrading to Windows 98 or if your recent upgrade is causing problems. Windows NT users will want to read the site's NT guides, which cover performance-tuning, remote access, and other tricky topics.
Features • hundreds of downloadable hardware drivers • updates, patches, and resources for Microsoft Office • book reviews

Financial Services

American Century .....www.americancentury.com
Whether you are a conservative, moderate, or aggressive investor, American Century has a fund targeted at your needs. This site makes it simple to invest in your choice of more than 7,000 mutual funds. The news area includes analysis of market turbulence and how events in Washington, D.C., influence the market, as well as a quarterly newsletter.
Features • stock, bond, and option trading • retirement services • informative FAQ

Bonds Online .....www.bonds-online.com
Bonds Online offers market information about tax-free municipal bonds, treasury bonds, funds, and brokers. If you've got a specific question, check the glossary or "ask the Bond Professor" for his advice. You can also buy subscriptions to bond newsletters, and buy software that will calculate the prices and yields of your bonds.
Features • daily bond-market commentary • daily pricing of U.S. Treasury securities • U.S. savings-bond calculator and FAQ

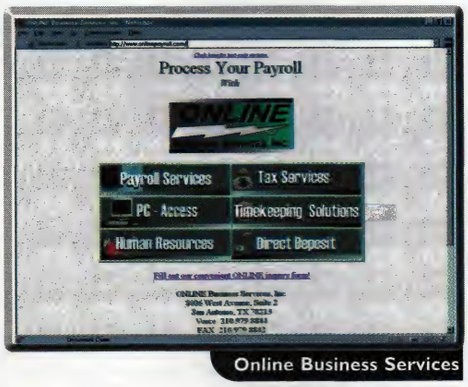
Datek Online .....www.datek.com
Investors can build their own portfolio at Datek using online resources to make educated decisions. Datek offers a guarantee of a 60-second execution, or the trade is free. Commission for all online trades is $9.99. Datek is open to individuals, custodians, investment clubs, and others. Retirement accounts are also available. Member support is available via telephone, e-mail, and fax.
Features • demo accounts available • immediate portfolio updates • free real-time quotes
Caveat • customer support can be slow

EDGAR Online.....www.edgar-online.com
If you're searching for up-to-date financial reports on companies, this is a great place to start. Look up Securities and Exchange Commission filings submitted as little as 24 hours ago. Subscribers to EDGAR Online Premium enjoy benefits such as real-time SEC filings, insider transaction filings, and customizable company watch lists.
Features • technical support via phone and e-mail • can search the SEC database • historical data dating back to 1994

ETrade.....www.etrade.com
ETrade is designed for folks who have a firm grasp of the fundamentals of investing and possess a do-it-yourself attitude. ETrade investors can learn all about companies and then build and manage a stock portfolio. Sign-up is free with a cash or margin account. Members receive a variety of services including free real-time quotes, money-market funds, and free IRAs.
Features • huge FAQ area • online game makes investing fun • live chats

Hoover's Online .....www.hoovers.com
Hoover's Online offers countless resources for financial research. Free tools include IPO Central, offering information on companies that have filed to go public with a stock offering; and Stock Screener, a tool for choosing stocks based on 20 performance criteria. Subscribers receive access to company profiles, in-depth financial reports, and powerful searching tools.
Features • 3,500 company profiles • SEC documents available in real time • daily financial headlines

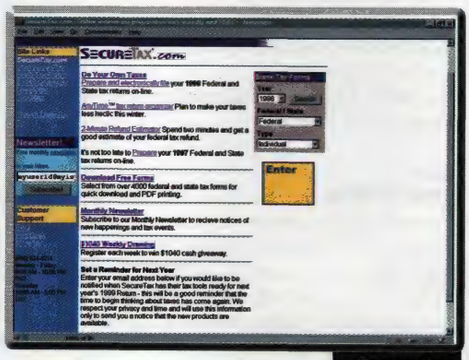
National Payment Corp.....www.directdeposit.com
Since 1991, National Payment Corp. has been providing direct-deposit services for small and medium-size businesses. Using a secure Web browser, you can submit payroll for direct deposit to your employees' bank accounts. The site can exchange data with more than two-dozen accounting software programs.
Features • demo accounts available • Web-based technical support • online glossary and FAQ



Online Business Services

Online Business Services.....www.onlinepayroll.com
This flexible personnel-tracking system will help any business become more efficient and in some cases even get better financial reports—more than 80 standard reports are available. Online Payroll can receive input via telephone, modem, fax, or direct link with your electronic time clock. Paychecks can be sent via direct deposit or via modem for printing at your site, or be delivered.
Features • track your company assets • tax services • no business too small

PostOffice.Net.....www.postoffice.net
Many small and medium-size businesses are making the choice to outsource e-mail service for their employees. PostOffice.Net, a division of USA.NET, offers complete e-mail service including customer support for your business. The long list of standard and premium features includes necessities such as spell checking and vacation reply, as well as luxuries like language translation.
Features • personalized domain names • free customization options • mail forwarding



SecureTax

Quicken.com .....www.quicken.com/small_business
This site offers copious information for small-business owners. You'll find insightful articles on accounting, payroll, and taxes. Check the benefit and retirement page to learn how to choose an IRA, create an employee-benefit policy, or provide health insurance. The site also offers a business-oriented buyer's guide and downloadable business documents you can customize.
Features • weekly columns and expert advice • business headlines • you can buy accounting software, stamps, and checks

SecureTax.....www.securetax.com
With SecureTax, you can prepare, electronically file, and print federal and state tax returns. The site walks you through the steps of preparing 1040 or 1040EZ tax forms using helpful wizards. Because you can save your progress at any time, you don't have to complete your return in one session.
Features • two-minute refund estimator • free newsletter offers notice of tax news and events • 4,000 federal and state tax forms available for download

StockMaster .....www.stockmaster.com
Stock traders will find this site an invaluable reference tool. StockMaster will tell you the trading price and all the sundry details about any stock or investment fund, and provide instant graphs of that stock's activity. Track the stock's rise and fall over the past year and see other investors' opinions about that company. A subscription service provides access to Baseline Company Profiles of more than 7,000 companies.
Features • catalog of books for beginning and expert investors • can create custom investment profiles • message boards for investment discussions

Virtual Payroll.....www.virtualpayroll.com
Available in all 50 states, Virtual Payroll simplifies the endless cycle of payroll and taxes for small businesses. Through this secure site, company and employee information is entered to set up initial payroll accounts, then with periodic input, all other functions are taken care of for you. All your employees will be paid by direct deposit within 48 hours.
Features • references available • preparation and filing of quarterly and annual payroll tax returns • helpful FAQ

Wall Street Research Net .....www.wsrn.com
For sheer mass of investment links, you can't beat Wall Street Research Net. This site offers thousands of links to help professional and private investors perform research on companies and mutual funds, and to locate important economic data that moves markets. For a fee, brokerage reports, historical stock-price data, baseline reports, and financial reports in spreadsheet format are available.
Features • investment chat • stock screener • links to publications on economy, equity, and markets

Travel and Leisure

Biztravel.....www.biztravel.com
Plan your trip; research your destination; and make airline, car, and hotel reservations. Catering to the business traveler, Biztravel offers unique services for the frequent traveler, including predeparture pager alerts, which send gate information and destination weather reports to your alphanumeric pager. Biztravel also lets you download your itinerary to your palmtop or desktop calendar program.
Features • track frequent-flyer miles automatically • automated upgrades make getting a first-class seat easier • online magazine

Cruise Web.....www.cruiseweb.com
With most of the world as a potential destination and 11 cruise lines from which to choose, using this site may be the easiest choice you make while planning your next vacation. Shoppers can look at itineraries based on destination or preferred cruise line. Check out photographs of the ship and its room accommodations. The Hot Rates e-mail service gives information on the deepest discounts.
Features • special-offer area displays great deals
Caveat • not all cruise lines are listed

Easy Sabre .....www.easysabre.com
Easy Sabre is the oldest computer reservation system available to the public. It's powerful: You can book a flight on 400 airlines, rent a car from any of 50 companies, or book a room in 40,000 hotels. The service is accessible only via a text interface, and there's a handy reference guide to show you the basics.
Features • zoom in on the three lowest fares • receive tickets by mail or pick up at local travel agent • store frequent-flyer numbers and meal preferences
Caveat • nonintuitive command interface

Excite Travel.....www.city.net
No matter where you're headed, Excite Travel is a great place to start your online travel research. This site offers copious information on just about any earthbound place you can name. Type in the name of a city, a state, or a country, or just zoom in using the world map, and Excite Travel will provide detailed maps, information on lodging, regional news, weather info, and more. When you're ready, you can book a flight.
Features • frequent-flyer mileage minder • insider's guide to renting a car • restaurant-review finder

Expedia.....expedia.msn.com
Folks looking for travel information here will have to register as members, but there is no fee to do so. Expedia offers a vast travel network, and planning your next business trip or vacation should be a breeze. Whether you are looking for details on cruises and resorts, or are going cross-country on Amtrak, you can book your trip here.
Features • online travel magazine • sports and adventure packages • luggage and accessories sold
Caveat • lengthy registration process

Flifo .....www.flifo.com
Flifo is a Web-based travel service you can use to examine airline schedules, rental-car options, and hotel availability, and then purchase tickets, rent an auto, and book your accommodations. If your travel plans are flexible enough to accommodate some restrictions, you may be able to find discounted international airfares. Help is available at every step, and e-mail technical support is available during business hours.
Features • available in the U.S., Canada, U.K, and Australia • airline tickets delivered in two days • can check to see if a flight is on time

Global Online Travel

Global Online Travel .....www.got.com
This diverse site not only helps you find the best deal on airfare, but can help you find dinner once you arrive at your destination. Shoppers with a credit card can make instant reservations for air travel, rental cars, and hotels. Vacation packages are available, or you can design your own. The Global Spotlight section offers information on myriad topics ranging from spa vacations to flying with pets.
Features • one-stop vacation planning • can browse restaurants throughout the U.S. and Japan • information on major chains and regional providers

itravel .....www.itravel.com
The 1travel site offers all the traditional travel options, plus a lot more. It boasts a huge variety of specialty vacations, and a wide array of options in destinations and lodging. Check out your travel options such as train trips, cruises, or escorted tours. See all the lodging options, apartments, B&Bs, and even spas. The 1travel site has all the traditional travel options, plus a lot more.
Features • historical tours • adventure vacations • you can chat with other travelers

Preview Travel .....www.previewtravel.com
Thinking about a cruise? Looking for a low car-rental rate? Preview Travel helps shoppers in the market for a vacation to check out all their options and find some good deals. This versatile, easy-to-navigate site lets you book the trip you want, whether it's a short flight to visit relatives or a cruise through the Panama Canal.

ELECTRONICS.NET

A Consumer-Electronics Behemoth

A joint venture between Tops Appliance City and CyberShop International, electronics.net offers a behemoth selection of consumer-electronics merchandise. Tops Appliance provides products from more than 200 manufacturers, and CyberShop organizes it all into a snazzy, searchable, and secure site.

Browsing electronics.net, shoppers will find everything from camcorders to trash compactors. Home electronics is the main focus, and the site offers thousands of choices in more than a dozen departments. PCs, components, and computer accessories are also available.

Electronics.net provides customer service via e-mail, telephone, and fax. If you find the same item at a lower price within 10 days of your order, electronics.net's 110 percent guarantee will kick into action: Prove that you found a better price, and you'll get the item at 10 percent less than the competitor's. The reward program tenders savings certificates based on the amount you spend: Every dollar earns 10 spending points.

Free shipping is offered for some merchandise priced over $100. Federal Express shipping is standard on most items, with large or bulky appliances being the exception. Unfortunately, shipping charges are not automatically calculated when you place your order. ▼

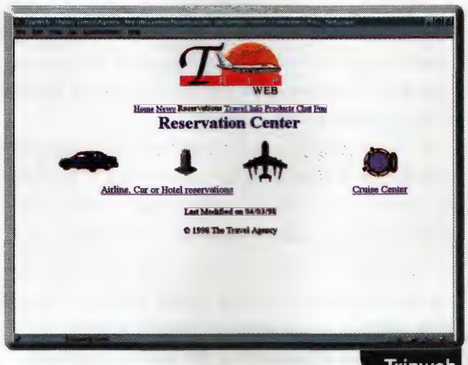
Features • weekly travel tips • handy weather center • help with currency conversion

Travel Channel .....www.travelchannel.com
Brought to us by the cable channel of the same name, Travel Channel offers pointers to vacation-information sites, travel newsletters, television-program listings, and a chat area. The shopping area offers CD-ROMs, books, and videos for travelers. Before you leave, check the links to comprehensive global health news and immunization information, travel advisories, and information on customs requirements.
Features • world maps • airfare prices • currency converter

Travelocity .....www.travelocity.com
Shoppers can plan almost every aspect of a business or a leisure trip at this Web-based travel agency. Travelocity provides secure online transactions for air, car, and hotel reservations, plus access to a vast database of travel information. At this one site, you can research potential destinations, find a bed and breakfast, make your reservations, and find a deal on a rental car. There's also a currency converter.
Features • 275-country travel guide • hotel maps and photos • Cruise Critic offers independent cruise reviews

TravelScape .....www.travelscape.com
Bad-weather blues? At TravelScape, you can check out the weather at the destination of your choice and then book a trip there. Simply choose from TravelScape's selection of major U.S. cities, then pick the dates of your vacation—it is really that easy. This Web-based travel store outlines the options and lets you determine your exact itinerary.
Features • vacation packages • no-risk reservation guarantee • around-the-clock customer service via telephone

TravelWeb .....www.travelweb.com
You can book your flight, rent a car, and find a hotel room with TravelWeb. Your next stop can be to visit the site's Traveler Resources area, where you will find online catalogs purveying luggage and other travel essentials. Once you're packed, use the site to check the weather at your destination and print maps.
Features • can search for hotels by city, amenity, price range, and other criteria • make and cancel reservations • special travel-offer mailing list



Tripweb

Tripweb .....www.tripweb.com
You can book your own airline, car, and hotel reservations with Tripweb. When you make an airline reservation, you are able to find out what type of aircraft you'll be on and even choose your seat. Before sending your ticket, a travel agent will review your reservation to assure you've found the best possible fare.
Features • request a cruise quote • $100,000 flight insurance on every airline ticket • free ticket delivery

Yahoo Travel .....travel.yahoo.com
With Yahoo Travel, you can research your next trip by destination (just click somewhere interesting on the world map), activity (such as cruises, adventure tours, and sports), or interest (everything from swimming with dolphins to paranormal phenomenon). When you're ready, book a flight, car, and hotel room.
Features • research cruises and package vacations • travel chat and message boards • can view travel alerts and airfare news

Consumer Electronics

Consumer Direct Warehouse ....www.consumer-direct.com
Shopping for something simple, such as a surge protector? Or complicated, like home air conditioning? Either way, Consumer Direct Warehouse can provide a diverse selection of brands and styles to explore. This Web store simplifies shipping by listing options and prices with each item. The product categories include a variety of home electronics such as DVD players, microwave ovens, and vacuum cleaners.
Features • Web TV systems and accessories • weekly specials • customer service via telephone or e-mail

Crutchfield.....www.crutchfield.com
Whether you are interested in setting up a home theater or are in the market for a nifty car stereo, Crutchfield should have what you need. The library area contains lots of helpful information and tips. The Vehicle Selector takes the guesswork out of car-stereo shopping by showing all the models that will fit your vehicle.
Features • can search by brand or product type • online specials offer deep discounts • two-day delivery on all items

electronics.net.....www.electronics.net
See the extended listing on this page.

Wholesale Connection ...www.wholesaleconnection.com
This Web store offers a breadth of home and car electronics. For instance, the selection of telephones ranges from Harley Davidson desktop phones to 900MHz cordless models. Wholesale Connection carries more than 100 brands, and shoppers can call or e-mail if they cannot find a specific item.
Features • complete line of car-stereo components • monthly specials • e-mail technical support

Books and Music

Amazon.com.....www.amazon.com
Amazon's catalog of books, CDs, and videos is nothing short of gargantuan. Speedy searches and insightful recommendations make it easy to find what you're seeking, even if you don't know for sure what that is.
Features • one-stop shopping for books, CDs, and videos • personalized recommendations • reviews and RealAudio music previews

Barnes and Noble .....www.barnesandnoble.com
With millions of titles in its easy-to-search catalog, Barnes and Noble's Web site is a book-lover's

dream. If the book you are looking for is out of print, don't despair: It may be available through Barnes and Noble's association with used-book sellers across the United States.
Features • extraordinary library of in-print books • may be able to locate out-of-print books • easy to search

CDNow .....www.cdnow.com
CDNow started selling compact discs on the Internet before "e-commerce" was part of the national lexicon. Its online store started years ago with a low-tech telnet connection, but has grown with the times—this mega-site now offers an extensive catalog of titles. Many discs have RealAudio sound clips and reviews for previewing online before you buy. Once it learns your musical taste, the Album Advisor will point you to other bands you're likely to enjoy.
Features • huge catalog of CDs, tapes, and vinyl • you can check out cover art • personalized music recommendations

K-TEL .....www.ktel.com
The words "as seen on TV" pretty much sum up K-TEL. The company that brought us commercials for the Bacon Krisper and Veg-O-Matic kitchen gadgets, not to mention countless party tapes, is now "as seen on the Web." You can choose from a variety of compilation CDs or create your own CD, mixing and matching from K-TEL's vast catalog of artists. You won't find an offer like that on TV.
Features • create your own CD for $10 • $3 CDs in the bargain bin

Music Boulevard .....www.musicblvd.com
Your music tastes may be strictly classical or eclectic—either way, this site has CDs to suit them. Search for a favorite artist and view a list of available CDs. The site can also help you discover other music you'll love by listing related groups and musicians that influenced your favorite artists.
Features • music news and gossip • import CDs and vinyl • purchases earn frequent-flyer miles

Powell's Books.....www.powells.com
See the extended listing on this page. ▼

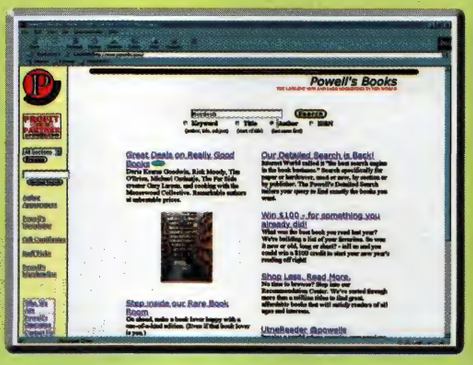
POWELLS.COM

An Online Independent

An independent bookstore, Powell's Books has long had a reputation for its massive collection of tomes. Its retail store in downtown Portland, Ore., encompasses an entire city block, and its collection of new, used, rare, and out-of-print books is unrivaled, with more than 1.5 million volumes.

Powell's entire catalog of books is online and updated daily. Searching is easy: Enter the author's name, book title, ISBN, or keyword. Then the real decision-making begins, as you are often presented with a variety of choices—new or used, hardback or paperback, even audiocassette versions of the title.

In the Rare-Book Room, you'll find first editions, signed volumes, and galleys from a broad cross-section of authors. Powell's sales area offers hundreds of thousands of titles. And the Recommendation Center and Staff Picks can help you discover a new author or find gifts. Virtual and traditional gift certificates are available, too. Domestic and international shipping options are clearly explained.



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HOW TO BUY ONLINE

BY KEVIN SAVETZ

At its best, online shopping offers a convenient cornucopia of choices, and saves you time and money. At its worst, it's a daunting, quasi-risky endeavor requiring you to scour scores of sites for the best value and send your credit-card number into the ether. Here are some online shopping basics to help you get the best deals, and to make sure your privacy and financial security remain intact.

WHERE AND HOW TO BUY ONLINE

To find online stores peddling what you want, query Web-based search engines—such as Snap.com's or Yahoo's—on a keyword, or turn to a compiled list like these e-Shopping pages.

Online stores meld the convenience of catalog ordering with some of the interaction and responsiveness of retail shopping. Unique to this commercial medium is the vendor's ability to customize what product selection you see and to notify you of special offers likely to pique your interest. Online stores range in scope from small specialty-item outfits to large mega-stores offering loads of products from competing manufacturers.

In terms of the mechanics, many use virtual shopping carts, to which you add items as you peruse the site. You then have the opportunity to review your choices at "checkout."

An increasingly popular Internet shopping option is the online auction. Each auction site is governed by its own procedures and protocols—and you want to be absolutely clear on these before you participate. It's a good idea to read the rules and directions, check with the Better Business Bureau, and observe a few auctions before you get involved in online bidding. Be aware that some companies use auctions to liquidate demonstration, refurbished, or older units.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Buying online is safe if you take basic precautions. Order only from reputable online stores. If it's a merchant you haven't heard of or used offline, check with the Better Business Bureau (*www.bbbonline.com*) and Public Eye (*www.thepubliceye.com*).

Before placing an order, make sure you're clear on the purveyor's policies regarding ordering, shipping, and returns. A credit card is the safest way to pay for online purchases. Make sure the Web site with which you're transacting supports your browser's built-in encryption—with the Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), so your account number is protected. A locked-padlock icon at the bottom of your browser window indicates a secure, encrypted connection. Finally, never send your credit-card number in an e-mail message.

GETTING THE BEST DEAL

Merchants with an online storefront pay less in overhead and usually pass those savings on to you. So you can find lots of low prices online. There are numerous sites with shopping bots and custom search tools to help you find the lowest of these. Three good ones to try out are bottomdollar (*www.bottomdollar.com*), Excite Product Finder (*jango.excite.com*), and mySimon (*www.mysimon.com*). For computer hardware and software, visit our own computershopper.com or CNET Shopper.com at *cnet.shopper.com*. It pays to visit more than one of these sites, as you may find a deal with one that the others don't uncover.

But remember that there's more to savvy shopping than finding the best price. A seemingly good deal can rapidly evaporate in the face of excessive shipping charges, handling fees, or sales tax, or the lack of a reasonable return policy. The best sites will tell you about these charges and policies before you buy. ▼